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RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SHANGHAI 000575

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DEPT FOR EAP/CM AND DRL/IRF
NSC FOR WILDER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 9/6/2017

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH SHANGHAI BISHOP JIN

REF: SHANGHAI 412 AND PREVIOUS

CLASSIFIED BY: Clark T. Randt, Ambassador, , U.S. Embassy
Beijing.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) Summary: In a meeting with the Ambassador on September 5, Shanghai Bishop Aloysius Luxian Jin was pessimistic about the prospects of reconciliation between the Vatican and Beijing. Talks were moving at a "marathon" pace and reconciliation would likely not occur in time for the 2008 Olympics. He worried that progress would become even slower after the Olympics when there would be less pressure on China. Nonetheless, Jin was "very satisfied" with the development of the Shanghai Catholic community, which had 160,000 parishioners and 144 churches. The 91-year old Jin appeared to be in good health and was mentally sharp during the meeting. End Summary.

Reconciliation Still a Long Way Away

12. (C) The Ambassador called on Shanghai Bishop Jin on September 5 to discuss PRC-Vatican relations and the religious situation in Shanghai. Bishop Jin remained pessimistic about the prospects of reconciliation between Beijing and the Vatican. He was pleased with the Pope's June 30 letter to Catholics in China, which showed an openness to discussions on the appointment of Bishops. Bishop Jin hoped that Beijing was seriously discussing the letter. However, he continues to believe that reconciliation between Rome and Beijing will take a long time. There are talks going on between the two sides but these talks are like a "marathon." Both sides must make concessions for there to be progress.

13. (C) Although it would be to the Chinese Government's advantage to reconcile with the Vatican before the 2008 Olympics, it was unlikely that there would be a breakthrough in the next year. Bishop Jin worried that after the Olympics, progress would become even slower because there would be less pressure on Beijing. He asserted that the USG, as a powerful government, could play a positive role and urged the USG to put more pressure on Beijing to reconcile with the Vatican. The Ambassador assured Bishop Jin that President Bush has raised the Vatican's relations with China in nearly every meeting with President Hu Jintao and will continue to press the Chinese on the issue of religious freedom in China.

Shanghai Diocese Flourishing

14. (C) Bishop Jin was "very satisfied" with the development of the Catholic community in Shanghai. The diocese was flourishing. It has 160,000 parishioners, 144 churches, 72 priests, 88 nuns and two seminaries. It is also building 5 new churches. In comparison, Beijing only has about 20 Catholic churches. The diocese also has a publishing house that has already printed 400 books and a printing house that has printed more than one million copies of the New Testament.

15. (C) Bishop Jin worried that there are not enough priests to support the growing diocese and noted that he must rely more and more on lay people to keep the diocese running. He was also concerned that most of the priests and nuns are from outside of Shanghai. Of the Diocese's 72 priests and 88 nuns, only 10 priests and 11 nuns come from Shanghai. According to Bishop Jin, most parents in Shanghai were reluctant to allow their only child to enter the clergy. On the positive side, 64 priests are relatively young and there are 120 students in the seminaries. Many of the non-Shanghai native priests, sisters and seminarians hail from northeastern China.

16. (C) Bishop Jin asserted that the religious situation in Shanghai is not typical. China is an immense country and there are differences in the development of religion between cities in the East and those in the interior. In addition, the application of religious policy differ depending on the local authorities. The Shanghai United Front and Religious Affairs Bureau is very open minded and liberal. Shanghai Party Secretary Xi Jinping also appeared to be liberal. Bishop Jin

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was less positive about Central Government leaders. He said Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association Vice Chairman Liu Bainian

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is too famous to be helpful. He also reported that he met with State Administration for Religious Affairs Administrator Ye Xiaowen about one month ago. They had an hour-long discussion. The Bishop said he spoke very frankly and Ye did not appear to be unhappy.

Religious Prisoners

17. (C) When asked about the underground church in Shanghai, Bishop Jin said the underground church is "almost nothing." Bishop Fan Zhongliang, the head of the Shanghai underground church, had Alzheimer disease and the church also had only 10 priests and no church buildings. Bishop Su Zhimin of Baoding, Hebei Province was also very sick. According to Bishop Jin, Bishop Su was not in jail but was under house arrest. He received good treatment, but was not free. When asked about what other imprisoned Catholics the USG should raise in meetings with the Chinese, Bishop Jin said that Bishop Jia Zhiguo of Zheng Ding, Hebei Province was a good man who has been imprisoned from time to time. He was unclear whether Bishop Jia was still in prison but noted that four months ago he was detained and two months ago he was free. He noted that Bishop Jia had met with him numerous times and asked for assistance. Bishop Jin provided him with books and some money. The Bishop suggested that the Ambassador raise the issue of dissidents with Minister of Public Security Zhou Yongkang, noting that Zhou was also on the Politburo. According to Bishop Jin, Zhou was rather liberal and could be helpful. (Comment: That is not the common impression of Zhou that we have. End Comment.)

18. (C) Bishop Jin noted that he himself had spent 27 years in prison. He said that luckily he was in prison with other high-profile prisoners and treated relatively well. He was not tortured and the food was not too bad. During times of intense political struggles, prisoners like him were treated worst. He added that one could always tell how intense the class struggle

was on the outside by the quality of food. At the end of the meeting, he said the United States had already provided him with a great deal of help and he had many friends in the United States. He noted that many in America seemed to have misconceptions about the church in China and some have even called him a traitor. He asked the Ambassador to tell Americans that there is only one Catholic Church in China, the Roman Catholic Church, and that the Catholics in China are loyal to the Vatican.

Bishop Jin Still Healthy and Active

19. (C) 91-year Bishop Jin appeared to be in good health and mentally active. He recalled details of his first meeting with the Ambassador at the American Club in Beijing five years ago and the second time during a previous trip by the Ambassador to Shanghai. The Bishop said he used to travel a great deal and visited the United States in 2004. However, since his heart attack three years ago, he has not been able to travel, which he said was a pity. At the time of his heart attack, the Shanghai Diocese believed that Bishop Jin was near death and had begun to prepare for his funeral. It had even bought new clothes for the Bishop's burial. Fortunately, the Bishop recovered and appears to still be in full control of his flourishing diocese.

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